

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request entry of the following amendments and remarks in response to the Office Action mailed February 20, 2009. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments and remarks contained herein place the instant application in condition for allowance.

Upon entry of the amendments in this response, claims 1 – 20 are pending. In particular, Applicants amend claims 1, 10, and 13 – 19. Reconsideration and allowance of the application and presently pending claims are respectfully requested.

I. Examiner Interview

Applicants first wish to express their sincere appreciation for the time that Examiners Jacob and Lai spent with Applicants' Attorney, Anthony Bonner, during a telephone discussion on May 13, 2009 regarding the outstanding Office Action. During that conversation, Examiners Jacobs, Lai, and Mr. Bonner discussed potential arguments and amendments with regard to claim 1 and 13, in view of the 35 U.S.C. §101 rejection and the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection to *Hickey* and *Heyen*. More specifically, the Examiners indicated that to overcome the 35 U.S.C. §101 rejection, Applicants should amend the written description by labeling each of the listed examples of computer-readable mediums as communication medium or storage medium and amending the corresponding claims to recite a "computer-readable storage medium." The Examiners also indicated that these amendments are not considered new matter. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that Examiner Lai carefully consider this response and the amendments.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §101

The Office Action indicates that claims 13 – 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 as allegedly being directed to non-statutory subject matter. Applicants amend claims 13 – 19, as indicated above. Applicants submit that these amendments comply with the Office Action request and that claims 13 – 19, as amended, fulfill all the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §101.

III. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

A. Claim 1 is Allowable Over Hickey and Heyen

The Office Action indicates that claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Publication Number 2002/0087646 ("*Hickey*") in view of U.S. Patent Number 5,093,918 ("*Heyen*"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for at least the reason that *Hickey* in view of *Heyen* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest all of the elements of claim 1. More specifically, claim 1 recites:

A communication system comprising:
a client-side group email folder accessible by each user in a predefined group of users;

a group email message in the client-side group email folder that is provided by an email application, the group email message having indicators, each indicator corresponding to a user in the predefined group of users, each indicator being configured to indicate whether the corresponding user has acted upon the group email message; and

an instant messaging application that is linked with the email application, the instant messaging application being associated with a common account as the email application, wherein the system is configured to provide an interface that includes a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application,

wherein the group email message is stored in a common database such that the users in the predefined group of users have access to the group email message via the database,

wherein the communication system is configured to provide an email interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message.

(Emphasis added).

Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1, as amended, is allowable over the cited art for at least the reason that neither *Hickey* nor *Heyen*, taken alone or in combination, discloses, teaches, or suggests a "communication system comprising... ***an instant messaging application that is linked with the email application, the instant messaging application being associated with a common account as the email application, wherein the system is configured to provide an interface that includes a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application***" as recited in claim 1, as amended. More specifically, *Hickey* discloses "a group electronic mailbox that is simultaneously accessible to multiple members or users of the group electronic mailbox" (page 1, paragraph [0010]). However, *Hickey* fails to even suggest ***"an instant messaging application that is linked with the email application, the instant messaging application being associated with a common account as the email application, wherein the system is configured to provide an interface that includes a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application"*** as recited in claim 1, as amended.

Additionally, *Heyen* fails to overcome the deficiencies of *Hickey*. More specifically, *Heyen* discloses "an improved electronic mail system which permits multiple users to share access to a single electronic mail object" (column 1, line 50). However, *Heyen* fails to even suggest ***"an instant messaging application that is linked with the email application, the instant messaging application being associated with a common account as the email application, wherein the system is configured to provide an interface that includes a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application"*** as recited in claim 1, as amended. For at least these reasons, claim 1, as amended, is allowable.

B. Claim 10 is Allowable Over Hickey and Heyen

The Office Action indicates that claim 10 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Publication Number 2002/0087646 ("*Hickey*") in view of U.S. Patent Number 5,093,918 ("*Heyen*"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for at least the reason that *Hickey* in view of *Heyen* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest all of the elements of claim 10. More specifically, claim 10 recites:

A communication method comprising:
providing indicators in a group email message, the group email message being provided to a predefined group of users, each indicator corresponding to one of the users in the predefined group of users, each indicator having a setting, each indicator configured to indicate whether the corresponding user has acted upon the group email message;
changing the setting of one indicator in response to the email message being acted upon by its corresponding user; and
providing, by an email application, an interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message, the interface including an instant messaging interface for a common account as the email application, wherein providing an interface includes providing a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application,
wherein the group email message is stored in a common database such that the users in the predefined group of users have access to the group email message via the database.

(Emphasis added).

Applicants respectfully submit that claim 10, as amended, is allowable over the cited art for at least the reason that neither *Hickey* nor *Heyen*, taken alone or in combination, discloses, teaches, or suggests a "communication method comprising... ***providing, by an email application, an interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message, the interface including an instant messaging interface for a common account***

as the email application, wherein providing an interface includes providing a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application" as recited in claim 10, as amended. More specifically, *Hickey* discloses "a group electronic mailbox that is simultaneously accessible to multiple members or users of the group electronic mailbox" (page 1, paragraph [0010]). However, *Hickey* fails to even suggest ***"providing, by an email application, an interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message, the interface including an instant messaging interface for a common account as the email application, wherein providing an interface includes providing a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application"*** as recited in claim 10, as amended.

Additionally, *Heyen* fails to overcome the deficiencies of *Hickey*. More specifically, *Heyen* discloses "an improved electronic mail system which permits multiple users to share access to a single electronic mail object" (column 1, line 50). However, *Heyen* fails to even suggest ***"providing, by an email application, an interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message, the interface including an instant messaging interface for a common account as the email application, wherein providing an interface includes providing a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application"*** as recited in claim 10, as amended. For at least these reasons, claim 10, as amended, is allowable.

C. **Claim 13 is Allowable Over *Hickey* and *Heyen***

The Office Action indicates that claim 13 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Publication Number 2002/0087646 ("*Hickey*") in view of U.S. Patent Number 5,093,918 ("*Heyen*"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for at least the reason that *Hickey* in view of *Heyen* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest all of the elements of claim 13. More specifically, claim 13 recites:

A computer-readable storage medium that includes a computer program that, when executed by a computer, performs at least the following:

providing indicators in a group email message, the group email message being provided to a predefined group of users, each indicator corresponding to one of the users in the predefined group of users, each indicator having a setting, each indicator configured to indicate whether the corresponding user has acted upon the group email message;

changing the setting of one indicator in response to the email message being acted upon by its corresponding user; and

providing, by an email application, an interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message, the interface including an instant messaging interface for a common account as the email application, wherein providing an interface includes providing a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application,

wherein the group email message is stored in a common database such that the users in the predefined group of users have access to the group email message via the database.

(Emphasis added).

Applicants respectfully submit that claim 13, as amended, is allowable over the cited art for at least the reason that neither *Hickey* nor *Heyen*, taken alone or in combination, discloses, teaches, or suggests a "computer-readable storage medium that includes a computer program that, when executed by a computer, performs at least the following... ***providing, by an email application, an interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message, the interface including an instant messaging interface for a common account***

as the email application, wherein providing an interface includes providing a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application" as recited in claim 13, as amended. More specifically, *Hickey* discloses "a group electronic mailbox that is simultaneously accessible to multiple members or users of the group electronic mailbox" (page 1, paragraph [0010]). However, *Hickey* fails to even suggest ***"providing, by an email application, an interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message, the interface including an instant messaging interface for a common account as the email application, wherein providing an interface includes providing a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application"*** as recited in claim 13, as amended.

Additionally, *Heyen* fails to overcome the deficiencies of *Hickey*. More specifically, *Heyen* discloses "an improved electronic mail system which permits multiple users to share access to a single electronic mail object" (column 1, line 50). However, *Heyen* fails to even suggest ***"providing, by an email application, an interface for providing the group email message and an option to view at least one user-specific email, the user-specific email being different than the group email message, the interface including an instant messaging interface for a common account as the email application, wherein providing an interface includes providing a single option to determine presence data for both the email application and the instant messaging application"*** as recited in claim 13, as amended. For at least these reasons, claim 13, as amended, is allowable.

D. **Claims 2 – 7, 9, 11, 12, 14 – 18, and 20 are Allowable Over *Hickey* and *Heyen***

The Office Action indicates that claims 2 – 7, 9, 11, 12, 14 – 18, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Publication Number 2002/0087646 (“*Hickey*”) in view of U.S. Patent Number 5,093,918 (“*Heyen*”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for at least the reason that *Hickey* in view of *Heyen* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest all of the elements of claims 2 – 7, 9, 11, 12, 14 – 18, and 20. More specifically, dependent claims 2 – 7, 9, and 20 are allowable for at least the reason that these claims depend from and include the elements of allowable independent claim 1. Dependent claims 11 and 12 are allowable for at least the reason that these claims depend from and include the elements of allowable independent claim 10. Further, dependent claims 14 – 18 are allowable for at least the reason that they depend from and include the elements of allowable independent claim 13. *In re Fine, Minnesota Mining and Mfg.Co. v. Chemque, Inc.*, 303 F.3d 1294, 1299 (Fed. Cir. 2002).

E. Claims 8 and 19 are Allowable Over *Hickey* and *Stark*

The Office Action indicates that claims 8 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Publication Number 2002/0087646 (“*Hickey*”) in view of U.S. Publication Number 2003/0233420 (“*Stark*”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for at least the reason that *Hickey* in view of *Stark* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest all of the elements of claims 8 and 19. More specifically, dependent claim 8 is allowable for at least the reason that this claim depends from and includes the elements of allowable independent claim 1. Further, dependent claim 19 is allowable for at least the reason that this claim depends from and includes the elements of allowable independent claim 13. *In re Fine, Minnesota Mining and Mfg.Co. v. Chemque, Inc.*, 303 F.3d 1294, 1299 (Fed. Cir. 2002).

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing amendments and for at least the reasons set forth above, all objections and/or rejections have been traversed, rendered moot, and/or addressed, and that the now pending claims are in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application and all pending claims are hereby courteously requested.

Any other statements in the Office Action that are not explicitly addressed herein are not intended to be admitted. In addition, any and all findings of inherency are traversed as not having been shown to be necessarily present. Furthermore, any and all findings of well-known art and Official Notice, or statements interpreted similarly, should not be considered well-known for the particular and specific reasons that the claimed combinations are too complex to support such conclusions and because the Office Action does not include specific findings predicated on sound technical and scientific reasoning to support such conclusions.

If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (770) 933-9500.

Respectfully submitted,

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